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THE RATTLE

Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw—*Pope.*

Vol. I]

SHANGHAI, FEBRUARY 1897

[No. 10

EN PASSANT.

RECENT events in Japan have added a new terror to existence in that fair land, compared to which even earthquakes are merely friendly and pleasant. This new terror is the Japanese school-boy; and the late *rencontre* of the German Minister at Tokio with this precocious factor in Japanese politics should make the diplomatic Body go warily in future,—at all events after school-hours. In the Land of the Rising Son your sucking doves roar mightily: Government trembles at the roaring, and a dignified Press upholds the national infantile dignity against all the wondering powers of Europe. The school-master abroad is often bad enough, but the school-boy under certain conditions is evidently much worse. The ignominious fate of Germany at his hands comes as a useful warning; henceforward when he drags his coat-tails, we shall give him the wall, and welcome. But it is time for the establishment of a Society for the Prevention of the Cruelty of Japanese Children to Foreigners.

Talking of Japan, the Government of that progressive country has made a new departure in its method of celebrating the deplorable demise of the late Empress-Dowager. To distribute about half-a-million dollars may be timely *largesse*; to the ordinary mind, however, it would appear to be a good way of converting the sad event into an occasion of general rejoicing. But when it comes to releasing some 13,000 gaol-birds from durance, the policy seems distinctly questionable. If felons and rogues are to obtain their liberty by the taking-off of royalty, the position of a crowned head is undoubtedly exposed thereby to considerable extra risk. The business is a sufficiently dangerous one already, without these inducements to crime.

In the East matters generally have been slack of late, and the paragrapher's trade is dull. At Peking, and further north, the genial Russian, having bitten off as much as he can conveniently chew at present, may be expected to remain quiet for a year or two—but the noise of Russian wings comes nearer every day, and if the Chinese Government

had any feelings about anything (which it hasn't) its present sensations must be very like those of the rabbit when about to disappear into the interior anatomy of the boa. The Chinese Government, however, is still busy borrowing money and discussing the virtues of melon-seeds and champagne with European diplomats; and so it shall be even unto the end of the chapter. There are the usual northern *canards* about trouble between the Empress Dowager and young Kuanghsü over milliners' bills, cookery and pretty Palace chambermaids; we have become accustomed to these necessary aids to modern journalism, and can afford to ignore them. But the rumour that the great Li Hung-chang mixes freely in the foreign *réunions* of the gay capital, rests on surer foundations; and the Ex-Viceroy's *vade-mecum*, the ever-ready silver cuspidore, is becoming in Peking society what the white plume of Navarre was at Ivry.

Locally, the air is full of Syndicates; Railway Syndicates, Mining Syndicates, China-development Companies, Limited, and many others. I suppose this indicates an awakening at last,—but I sadly fear the persons awakened will not be those who require it most.

The recent expenditure of Shêng Taotai in Cup Champagne and Biscuits for the energetic foreign gentlemen who visit him, has been quite unprecedented. Most of the gentlemen in question hail from the States; and their coming to sit in Shêng's boudoir, with the thermometer at freezing point, can only be due to one of two causes, *viz.* either that America still looks on China as a potential Eldorado, or that there is "money to burn" where they come from. Shanghai is always glad to welcome strangers; and from a purely commercial point of view we should doubtless do all we can to foster this Syndicate movement; but our point of view is not purely commercial, and we make bold therefore to warn the gentlemen who drink Mr. Shêng's white seal, not only against that vintage, but against the futility of spending any more time with the Director-in-Chief of Chinese Railways. An offer to sell every dollar's worth of plant at fifty cents might possibly induce business, if Trunk lines are ever meant to be started

in Sheng's lifetime (a big "if"), but I do not suppose that these terms would appeal even to a Syndicate. No, my friends, better take a hint from one of your own poets, and "folding your tents, like the Arabs, as silently steal away."

Railways, and the development of China on European lines, mean a wholesale political reform, and the conversion of Chinese officialdom to honesty. There are two ways, and only two ways, of converting the Chinese official: the first, expulsion from office, and the second, sudden death. A Syndicate got up with either of these ends in view might possibly accomplish a satisfactory introduction of Railways and other laudable objects—but, *pour moi*, I would not put my hard-earned coin into any other form of enterprise for opening up the Middle Kingdom.

There is progress reported from the Anti-footbinding League in Chungking, and another small feat has there been accomplished. To anyone who has read the recently published correspondence between the League's fair Secretary and Peking, wherein the Yamèn courteously informs that lady exactly where the shoe pinches, it is evident that such effete bodies as China Associations, Chambers of Commerce, etc. would do well to conduct their future correspondence through a Lady-Secretary. Diplomacy is ever gallant, and were the representations of commerce forwarded over the signature of Emily or Jane, it is probable that the results would be more soothing, even if not more useful, than under the present régime. I make this suggestion, free of charge, to all bodies publick.

The Anti-footbinders' idea that a lady whose toes are unduly compressed should not be allowed "to share the official rank of her husband" is original and pleasing, although one does not see at the first glance how it is going to work. On the same lines, might we suggest that any European lady known to paint her face or to wear bloomers should be put on a milk-diet?

The following items of local intelligence—or lack thereof—appeared lately on the same page of an evening newspaper. They do not appear to require much comment, but to some minds they may suggest a doubt as to whether, in this best-governed of all possible worlds, we do not occasionally swallow a camel after much choking over a gnat.

1. "Shanghai-Lankat Tobacco shares at 525 cash, 550 for March and 560 for April delivery."
2. "A gang of gamblers, arrested in the Settlement, has been sent to the Mixed Court."

No wonder the Court is Mixed.

Wishing to learn something of the country of my adoption, I have been studying it lately in the pages of the C.P.R. Co.'s Guide Book, a volume which is in its fifth edition. The average citizen of Shanghai

may gather from this popular instructor that he lives in a massive six-story stone building, that he has a park handy (it surrounds the British Consulate), that he is socially formal, and elaborate, and that the corners of streets on the French side might be in Paris itself! He will further learn that no foreigner ever goes near the native city, and that the Chinese in our midst are relegated to a corner of the foreign settlement. All this on one page.

The gift of seeing ourselves as others see us is so rarely vouchsafed that it is ever welcome. I, for one, had never recognised Paris itself across the Yang-king-pang, and I must confess that the corner where the poor Chinese reside had escaped my notice. But we live and learn.

While on the subject of books, I would like to recommend one to parents and guardians, viz. *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts*. It is of a nature calculated to improve and stimulate the mind of any child, however bad, and its contents are much better for the young than—than, say, the conversation of an amah. As a sample, let me give from its pages the following beautiful and touching lines about "The Yak":—

As a friend to the children commend me the Yak:
You will find it exactly the thing:
It will carry and fetch, you can ride on its back,
Or lead it about with a string.

The Tartar who dwells on the plains of Thibet
(A desolate region of snow),
Has for centuries made it a nursery pet,
And surely the Tartar should know!

Then tell your papa where the Yak can be got,
And if he is awfully rich
He will buy you the creature—or else he will not
(I cannot be positive which).

WOULD TEMPER RISE?

Would temper rise were I to call you fair,
Praising your hazel e'en and silky hair?
When—since time was and since the world
began—
Was maid forbid to reap what praise she can?

Besides, the hazel and the silk are there.
You being, as I hold, beyond compare,
Winsome of soul as in your outward air,
I must speak out my thought. No truthful man
Should temporise.

Of tenderest azure are the hose you wear,
Not indigo to daunt him who should dare
To whisper sweetness from behind a fan.
Those hazel orbs may bless, they cannot ban;
Where such a soul looks through, no withering stare
Could temper eyes.

G. M. H. P.



"Why does that girl go about with her face all smothered in powder?"

"She can't help it, she's been through so many engagements."

WANTED, A VALENTINE.



THE LIEUTENANT'S SONG.

[Yeomen of the Guard.]

I remember, I remember, in the happy long ago,
When I was wholly ignorant of much that now I know,
I fancied it would rather suit my mental constitution
To be Lieutenant of the Tower and run an execution.
But, when I spoke of such a thing, my father shook
his head;

"Prefer," said he, "some other way of winning daily
bread!

The post is one of dignity, no doubt at all of that,
But all its hapless occupants are in an awful hat.

"It's called a hat for brevity, but is in truth a basin,
Not very large, but large enough to wash your hands
or face in,

And, really, it is hard to find an adequate excuse
For diverting chamber crockery to such abnormal use.
There's authority for a saying that to wear a golden
crown

Is not so easy as it looks, at least when lying down;
If this be true of crowns and kings, I wonder how you
dare

To face a humbler station in a hat of earthenware."

I did not heed his sage advice, I turned his fear to
scorn,

I said that yesterday was not the day that I was born,
And what he meant by "jawing" me I could not quite
discover nor

How such a foolish person had contrived to be my
governor.

And this is why I go about so very much depressed
By the singular habiliments in which you see me
dressed.

In vain my friends explain to me that laughter makes
them fat;

Let those grow stout who do not wear a basin for
a hat!

SPOONER, who *faute de mieux*, usually unbosoms his numerous love-affairs to me, had brought me another one. This time it was serious; he was going to become a Stoic for her sake, to save \$50 a month from his pay, and in three years' time he would be able to face her stern parent—who happens to be a bloated taipan—as a man of substance and firm resolve. He, and she, had decided this only yesterday, and now he rejected my offer of a cigar with something like contempt; love had eliminated tobacco from his life. But he took a weak whisky and soda.

He was walking up and down in my small den, singing her praises and his devotion, when his eye lit on a small Shakespeare calendar which adorns my wall. "By Jove," he said, "to-morrow's the 14th—St. Valentine's day. I must send her something. Let's see what the old buffer's got to say about it." (By "the old buffer" he meant the Bard of Avon)—

"To-morrow is St. Valentine's day
All in the morning betime
And I a maid at your window
To be your Valentine."

After reading it twice—with as much feeling as if it had been the advertisement of a porous plaster—he was silent for a while, evidently thinking. Then he asked my advice.

"How can I celebrate the day?" he said. "You see, Spiffins, old chap, none of the good old English customs exist out here; the rising generation of Shanghai hasn't a chance to learn much about St. Valentine or Guy Fawkes, or any of the things that youngsters go in for at home."

"No," said I, "and they wouldn't thank you for them either; any child old enough to walk in these parts is far too *blasé* for such silly survivals."

"That's just it; and if I sent Sybil an ordinary Valentine (supposing such a thing to exist in our midst)—one of those cupid's-lace-and-poetry affairs wherein you and I rejoiced of old—she'd probably think I'd gone off my head. There's no childish nonsense about Sybil, and she hasn't been brought up on Valentines."

"Why not buy some roses, tie them with a bit of ribbon, and send them by the coolie with a letter? She couldn't help liking that, and you could lug in old Valentine somehow?"

"Oh, that's no use! I've sent her flowers every day for a fortnight, and my boy's grin is beginning to make me sick. No, I want something special, and appropriate to the occasion. Something tender and effective."

A happy thought seized me and I grappled with it.

"You might write her some verses," I said, "a Nocturne, or a Serenade something after the style of the 'Devout Lover.' She would have to appreciate the occasion if you did that."

"I'm not much of a poet," said Spooner, "in fact, I doubt if she'd like it. Now, Spiffins, if you were to roll me off three or four pretty verses—"



ENTINES.

OPEN LETTERS.

V.—To a Reader.

DEAR SIR (OR MADAM),

When I received your letter written in what, to my expert eye, was obviously a feigned hand, I confess that I did not immediately entertain the idea of replying to it. On the contrary, by tearing the missive into small pieces and placing the same in my waste-paper basket, I endeavoured to rid myself of all further responsibility in regard to the writer. But I reckoned without my friend Dawkins, a frisky globetrotter upon whom I lately practised the rites of hospitality. Some few days ago he left me on his way to Cambodia, and this morning I received from Hong-kong an envelope containing your letter, which had been ingeniously pieced together with such transpositions as served to render it libellous wherever they did not render it unintelligible. Accompanying the restored letter was a note from Dawkins to the effect that he had thought it necessary for my protection that he should rummage the contents of my basket, and that he desired my gratitude in return for his friendly offices. I fancy, do you know, that what Dawkins really expects is a compliment on his drollery, and that there is every chance of his being disappointed. This, however, is no concern of yours, and I have no doubt that you, on your part, will be heartily grateful to the gentleman whose well-timed jest has elicited a reply to your letter. For I must tell you that Dawkins' patchwork reached me in an hour of comparative leisure which I have resolved to devote to the task of answering your mild effusion.

Do not think, my good soul, that I am about to satisfy your manifold inquisitiveness. Nothing could be further from my purpose than the critical exegesis of the "RATTLE," Nos. I—IX, which you seem to require of me. It is in no way discreditable to you that you should have forgotten your Latin or never learned any, while, on the other hand, it would become me little to reveal what an author has chosen to shroud in the decent obscurity of a learned language, and less to invite your attention to blunders which have hitherto escaped your notice. You say that you are mentally exercised over allegorical and other interpretations of "Amaryllis," and you appeal to me for relief: but I am so much your well-wisher that I cannot consent to deprive your intellect of a healthy stimulus. And when you ask me to supply local colouring for such sketches as "A Yule Tide Feast" or "A Merchant," you ask that which

" not enriches you
And makes me poor indeed ; "

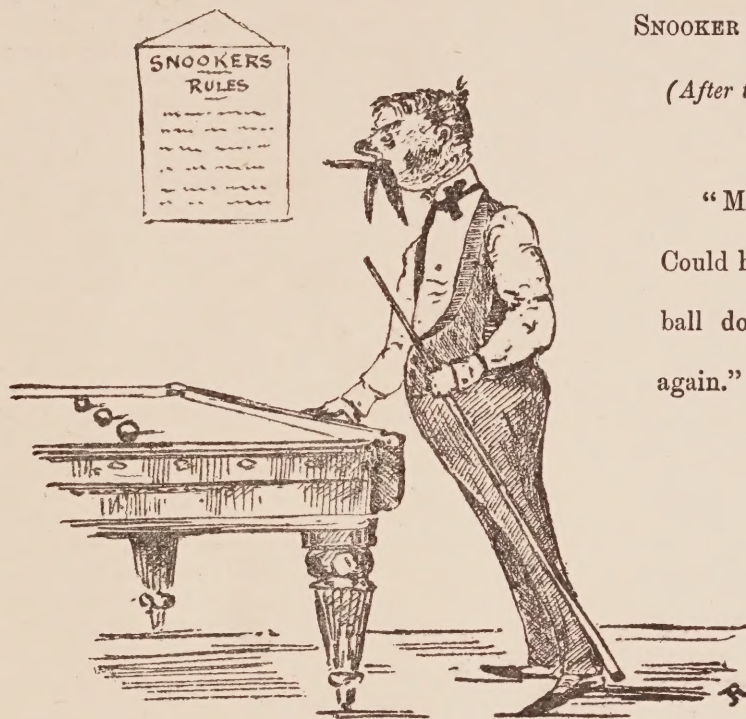
a prey to all the lawyers who are not too nice to handle actions for libel. Besides, if you cannot fit your own acquaintances to their appropriate parts I am afraid that you must be an idiot, and I am not conscious of any special aptitude for the treatment of diseases of the brain. Excuse my plain speaking.

But although I decline the functions of a commentator, you must not for a moment suppose that I am angry with you. You have given me no cause of offence, and I have many reasons for esteeming and even for admiring you. As a regular supporter and student of a periodical which, by your own confession, you do not entirely comprehend, you stand on the borderline between the sublime and the ridiculous, but as a person claiming tastes and opinions of your own you occupy a much more worthy position and are entitled to the respectful attention of Editors, to whom the announcement that you are entirely satisfied with *some* of the literary matter published under their auspices cannot fail to afford gratification. That tastes differ is a truism which scarcely receives due recognition from those responsible for the production of newspapers. For while no one thinks of suggesting that the works of George Meredith or Christina Rossetti are calculated to excite enthusiasm in a votary of Mr. Grundy or Doss Chiderloss, the uniformity of style and tone which pervades certain journals would lead one to suppose that they were intended for a single class of readers. Happily no such complaint can be made in the case of the "RATTLE," and your appreciative reference to "Suidrog" is a proof, if proof be needed, that variety is charming.

I was rather impressed by one paragraph in your letter, in which you state that in your opinion the Editors of the "RATTLE" do not properly understand the use of scissors, and that if they went in more for clippings from papers published in England and America they would produce more readable numbers; you add (what is true) that a tasty *réchauffée* is better than a raw joint. But really I think you are unreasonable, or at any rate premature. We all know that journals are occasionally launched with deliberate and open intention of piracy, but I doubt whether you have any good ground for complaint on the score that the "RATTLE" owes its origin to different and more commonplace considerations. Besides, if you reflect for a moment, you will admit that when they have exhausted local talent the management will, in the natural course of things, be forced to rely mainly upon pillage. So do not agitate yourself, I beg, but wait in patience for the good time that is coming.

Your view, as a subscriber, that you get more pages of literary matter than your subscription entitles you to is novel and interesting, and moreover strikes me as being sound. But while I commend your frank indication of superfluous poems and articles, I must refrain for obvious reasons from giving publicity to your opinions.

The "RATTLE" takes leave to congratulate the Literary and Debating Society on its numerous recent triumphs. For the theatrical manager Shakespeare may spell ruin, but for the L. & D. S. it undoubtedly spells success. Much praise is due to a most energetic and painstaking Committee for the good work it has done.



SNOOKER PLAYER.

*(After the marker has replaced
the green ball.)*

“Mosh’ ’stornary thing.
Could have sworn I put that
ball down, an’ here ’t ish
again.”

LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE.

So they prate about England as feeble and old
And tottering downhill to decay;
They sneer when her long roll of glories is told
And think with a light word to laugh them away.
It’s true we’re not given to bluster or brag
But we fight when fight we must with a will;
And wherever unfurled the red cross of her flag,
The sons of Old England are Englishmen still.

“Let sleeping dogs lie” is the warning we cry,
Old England loves peace while she can;
But come who come may, we are ready as they,
Let who will find the hour, we will find them the man.

Let them add to their navies big ship after ship,
Then point to their numbers and crow.
What matter the vessels they launch from the slip?
They can’t build the Jacks, as they very well know.

Let Liberty groan while each son of the soil
Is pressed to make grand a review;
We Britons, though left to our worthier toil,
When fighting’s the game have the stuff in us too.

“Let sleeping dogs lie” is the warning we cry,
Old England loves peace while she can;
But come who come may, we are ready as they,
Let who will find the hour, we will find them the man.

Come and show me an ocean so lone and remote
That our ensign is there unknown;
Come show me a shore where its folds never float,
Where the red on the white yet remains to be flown.
Is there anywhere a bay where our cruisers never lay
Or a sea that dares dispute our reign?
All the world knows we fight but for honour and right,
As we’ve fought so we’ll fight again;
For Queen and for Country, for honour and right,
We’ve fought half the world and we’ll fight it again.

“Let sleeping dogs lie” is the warning we cry,
Old England loves peace while she can;
But come who come may, we are ready as they,
Let who will find the hour, we will find them the man.

G. M. H. P.



WILFRID.—Thou hast a good post and hast cause to be merry.

POINT.—Cause? Have we not all cause? Is not the world a big butt of humour, into which all who will may drive a gimlet? See, I am a salaried wit; and is there aught in nature more ridiculous? A poor dull, heart-broken man, who must needs be merry or he will be whipped; who must rejoice, lest he starve; who must jest you, jibe you, quip you, crank you, wrack you, riddle you, from hour to hour, from day to day, from year to year, lest he dwindle, perish, starve, pine and die! Why, when there's naught else to laugh at, I laugh at myself till I ache for it!

THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD.

THE public has borne with so many critiques—or shall we say descriptions?—of the A.D.C.'s latest addition to its long line of successes, that we do not propose inflicting anything more of the sort on our readers, except these pictures. If they should not all be absolutely faithful portraits,—which we do not admit—let the over-captious remember that these things cannot be done, and printed, at a moment's notice; they require an amount of time and study that is but faintly appreciated by the man in the street who buys them—with other gems—for a humble piece of silver. In one or two instances, our artist alleges that he was never quite certain what actors were playing certain important parts—the play-bills were distinctly unreliable—and his sketches, in spite of himself, assumed certain composite features. We trust, nevertheless, that they will serve to keep green many pleasant memories of the "Yeomen" both for the players and for those who enjoyed a most artistic performance.



FAIRFAX & ELSIE.—A man who would woo a fair maid,
Should 'prentice himself to the trade;
And study all day,
In methodical way,
How to flatter, cajole and persuade.



LEONARD.—The scheme is rash and well may fail;
But ours are not the hearts that quail—
The hands that shrink—the cheeks that pale
In hours of need!



PHOEBE.—But then, of course, you see
I'm not thy bride!

After the first performance of the Opera, there reached us, anonymously, the following plaintive lines, which were evidently meant for the A.D.C.:—

"The screw may twist and the rack may turn,
And Jack may come but Jack must learn
That the song you sing is not for him
But for the swells with which Shanghai doth abound."

The originality of the composition is striking, and it evidently meant that the writer, an honest tar, could not afford A.D.C. prices. When, therefore, admission to the gallery was reduced to 50 cents, we expected that Jack would prove grateful; nor were we disappointed, for a few days later we received another effusion. This time it took the form of criticism, keen and pointed, conveyed in lines of unusual vigour. We regret that the size of our pages prevents us from reproducing these lines, but we hasten to say that the worthy man expressed his delight at the performance; he added, however, *that he had been a long time away from England*. When we say that this genial critic rhymes "daughter" with "laughter" our readers will realise the loss which they are sustaining in our inability to print his verses.

A DOMESTIC EFFUSION.

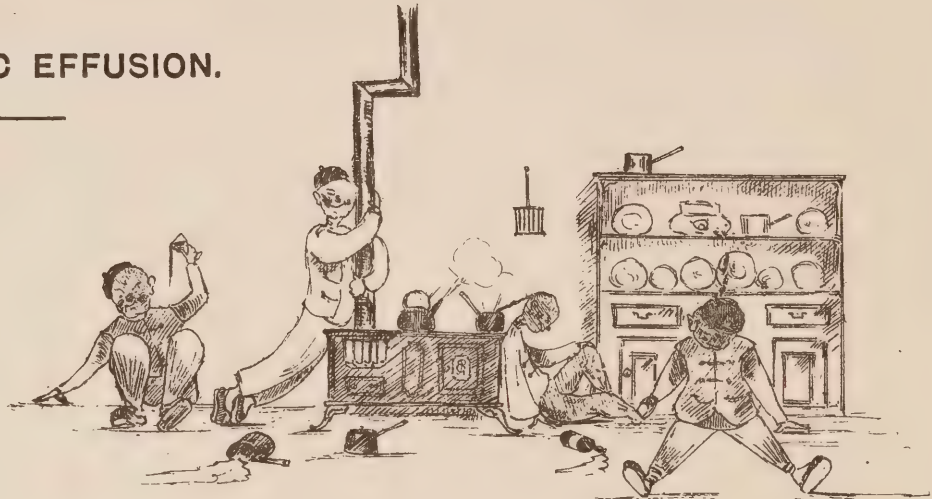
DEA MR. RATTLE,

Yes, we have started house-keeping again, worse luck. We have been at it just a month, and have already had two cooks (so-called). The first one was too convivial for our quiet habits. On the occasion of our first dinner-party my wife came home at five in the evening, to find that he had been celebrating his birthday with some friends, and there they lay all over the kitchen, the *chef's* queue in the soup. As we hadn't ordered hair soup the cook had to go. He didn't seem to mind much, and gave us to understand that our modest establishment was beneath the notice of a really first-class artist anyhow.

Our next cook was sober enough but unluckily had only learned to cook one thing, custard, so he put it into every dish, soup, sauce, gravy, pudding,—all were custard, and "*toujours*" custard is apt to pall.

I have a secret belief (very secret,—for heaven's sake don't tell her) that my wife's system of keeping what she calls the house-books has something to do with our difficulties. She has two long wrangles daily with the cook which result in the entry in those books of some mysterious signs which, when added up at the end of the month, come to any nice little sum that she wishes to squeeze out of me. Poor dear, she was seedy for some days about a fortnight ago, and I did the housekeeping, and very easy I found it. Every two or three days, as the spirit moved me, I "did" the book under the cook's directions: soup-meat, 20 lbs @ 15 cents; fish, 6 catties @ 45 cents, and so on, and jolly good chow I had, but, lord, what a row when the old lady got better! She said I had ordered enough food for a regiment, and that ruin stared us in the face, and she sat down and ordered two new frocks from home then and there. Of course, I had to give her a little present to shew how sorry I was for my extravagance, and we are good friends again now, but I think the cook prefers my methods, and he doesn't express as much sorrow as he ought to when the "Missus" falls sick.

My wife is justly proud of her economical methods of dressing the children; only last week she got hold of my best pair of flannel breeks (I have only two, you know) and cut them up for winter what d'you call'em



THE COOK'S BIRTHDAY - AND "MISSISS" HAS A DINNER-PARTY!

for the chicks, and whenever she wants to get a new bonnet or jacket out of me, her last one is always hacked up into something for the kids. It's no use remonstrating, she only looks offended and says, "Oh, very well, if you prefer buying expensive underclothing from home for the children, I'm glad you are making so much money, my dear." Then I go out and swear in the garden, and kick the dog if he is there, and think of my stock in the Bank of China and Japan.

Latterly the dear little woman has been devoting her time to teaching the cook to "do things" out of Mrs. Beeton's cookery book, and has been striving at dainty dishes from the *Queen*. Now I have the digestion of a horse (she says a donkey), but no horse could stand this, and I am coming down to Shanghai soon to be copper-lined by the New Dock Company. She made a cake the other day from some marvellous recipe, and perhaps it would have been all right if she hadn't left the flour out, and she was quite hurt when I said it was too rich. What a night we had with the children after it, to be sure. When I go home (if I survive) I shall buy my wife a bike and do the housekeeping myself.

Yours dyspeptically,

R.

CHEFOO, 1st February 1897.

The Niger Expedition—or should it be spelled "Nigger"?—is having lively times with the Foulah tribe. These dusky natives are evidently very clever foolahs, and after a successful ambush they get fullah than ever. Their war-dances, according to the home-press, are performed in Loie Foulah's best manner, and even wonderfoulah.

CONCERNING HOUSEBOAT LOWDAHs.

THAT certain professions tend to increase the original sin of poor humanity is a matter of common knowledge. We do not look for the attributes of a bishop in a bargee, nor do we expect the higher standards of morality in publicans, rat-catchers, church-wardens and politicians. We look with suspicion, justified by experience, on any man who habitually deals with horseflesh or Chinese officials, and we deal warily with architects and lawyers. But in none of these professions do we find the depths of human depravity which obtain in the small but select fraternity of Shanghai's houseboat lowdahs. In them Satan, after searching the whole earth, has found fruitful soil for the cultivation of neglected sins of every description—an abiding-place for all his surplus stock of villainy. It is a strange thing, for the nautical profession, as a rule, is guileless and childlike; your simple sailor assimilates in his wanderings a certain frank honesty that savours cleanly, as of sea-salt. But the houseboat lowdah knows nothing of salt, except what he smuggles, and his character would appear to derive its chief features from the nature of the element wherein his boat lies moored,—an element of which the less said the better.

There are two points of view from which the lowdah may be (or rather has to be) considered, *viz.* that of the wealthy and amiable gentleman who owns the boat, and that of the humble person who borrows it. The latter point of view is the more common of the two—it is unfortunately the one from which I am obliged to contemplate him myself. I say unfortunately, but on reflection I do not know that even the pleasure of owning a houseboat, and lending it to my friends, would reconcile me to the hideous incubus of its skipper's constant society. But to compare the attitude of the lowdah towards his so-called master with that which he adopts towards casual tenants of his boat is like comparing a tame pig to a wild boar.

Where his employer is concerned, many of his worst propensities lie *perdu*, and frequently unsuspected; all his evil faculties being devoted to the matter of getting as many dollars as possible out of the said employer. All Chinese hirelings share this laudable trait, and when exercised in moderation we have come to expect and to tolerate it; but for sheer rapacity the lowdah can give the ordinary highwayman points, and he has brought the art of persistent and ingenious squeezing to a perfection unequalled even by a godown-man. He has, it is true, more leisure for the concoction of stratagems and devices than any of his fellow mercenaries, for as a rule he spends five days out of the seven in wanton idleness, his nights devoted to opium and gambling and his days to the invention of schemes for defraying the cost of these luxuries. Therefore it is that he does a considerable retail trade in coal, oil, rope, candles, and all the unenumerated trifles which appear on his monthly bills; to the

skilful evaporation of these things he devotes the best energies of his mind. Also in the matter of coolies, he and his colleagues have perfected an ingenious system, whereby most of their personal relatives are gathered together, as their services are required, at rates which vary considerably from those actually charged. Finally, he knows to a nicety the amount which he can annually extract under the general heading of repairs—an amount which makes the up-keep of a houseboat somewhat higher than that of a three-storied house. And in all these matters he faces his employer with the comfortable knowledge that should the camel's back give way under the strain, it will not matter to him—for the lowdahs' guild is a close corporation, and his dismissal simply means another shuffle of a very greasy pack of cards.

But it is to the outsider, the casual tripper, that our friend reveals the choicest beauties of his nature. Which of us has not sat down over the cabin-stove and cursed the unwritten law which forbids the chastisement of another man's menial? The lowdah, still sleepy from yesterday's debauch, revels in this impunity, which preserves him from the *argumentum ad hominem*; right well he knows too, that, storm as you may, it is unusual to look the borrowed horse in the mouth, and that on Monday you will pay without demur, for the lender's sake.

convenient bridge while you are at dinner; he knows you will have to make good the damage, and there are pickings in such accidents for himself.

Next morning, at the hour when you should be in a ricksha on the Bund, you find yourself facing the first of the flood at the top of the seven-mile reach. At this stage you tell the lowdah what you think of him in the plainest and worst language. He receives it in silence, his mouth being full of rice at the time; but when you have done, he confides to the comfortably resting crew what he thinks of you—and his remarks are the cause of considerable native merriment. There appears to be nothing for it but to walk home, until by a lucky chance a launch looms in sight. The lowdah knew all about that launch before you started—he has a cousin on board—and three out of the five dollars which you pay for the tow are his reward for a carefully devised stratagem.

If, waiting hereafter on the banks of Styx, I should see Charon coming through the gloom in guise of a Chinese lowdah—which may well be the case, if the gods wish to harass humanity—I shall refuse to cross. I would rather sit and shiver on the bank.

To be inserted in the "Rattle", Feb'y 1897

NOTICE.

"Express" Messenger Service.

The attention of the Public is hereby drawn to the fact that, although letters between Shanghai and Coast or River Ports cannot be carried by steamers, unless passed through the Imperial Post Office, yet urgent private chits may be forwarded overland, by messengers on foot; these are called *Express* messengers, in contradistinction to the regular but slower system of the Imperial Post Office (or *petite vitesse*).

Further, although the charges in the case of Express Messengers, for letters of light weight, slightly exceed those of the Imperial Post Office, it is thought that the consequent avoidance of delay and anxiety will fully compensate outport correspondents for the additional expense—if any—involved, especially in the case of letters of importance to and from the River Ports.

DISHES OF THE DAY.

[Gelée sportive aux barbares.]

TAKE a couple of legs of beef and throw them into a nice hot squash. Stir vigorously until the squash begins to get thinner; then pound what is left into jelly, adding a little punch now and then à discrétion and cover with a deep mould. A few broken cocoanuts judiciously distributed give a very piquant flavouring, but must be employed in moderation. Remove the jelly carefully, pile it in heaps upon soft grass or moss, and serve as you please. The legs, if sufficiently fresh, may be used again in the same manner.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- BLACK AUSTER.** You say the pony *sat* down on his nose. Show us some day how it is done.
- FOOTBALL.** The symptoms you describe point to *Elephantiasis*. We recommend a mud bath by moonlight.
- POET.** We have received your "Ode to a Retiring Councillor." Who is the shy man?
- CHEFOO.** Cheer up. The air of your popular resort may be Fowler than it ought to be, but we believe the hotel will nevertheless be Fuller than ever soon.
- INDIGNANT PARENT.** Quite so; we sympathise with your views. It is very hard that you should not be able, while educating your family at the expense of the community, to keep the Public School private. Your idea of a similar measure for the Public Garden is excellent.
- FINANCIER.** Hardly. Chinese officials do not object to morganatic alliances; but we do not think there are fortunes in them.

N.B.

The Editors of the "RATTLE" invite contributions of light articles, verse, and sketches from Shanghai, Hongkong, and the outports. [Humorous rather than sentimental verse preferred, and short articles rather than long.] Sketches should be in pen and ink, etc. to facilitate reproduction, and in clear outline rather than detail work. MSS. and drawings which the editors are unable to publish will be returned to the sender. The Editors will not be liable, however, for loss or damage.

Anonymous contributions politely ignored.

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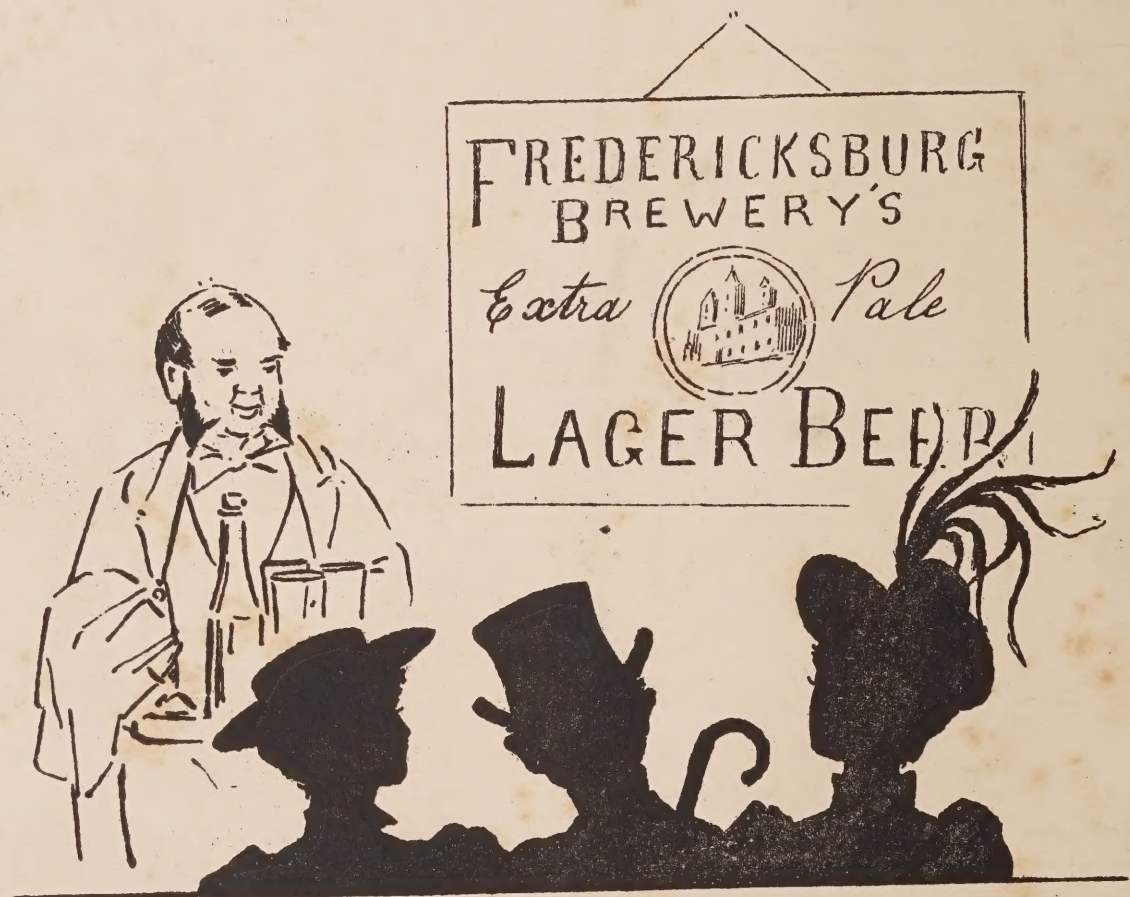
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